

Readers take ‘Militant,’ book, fund campaign over the top!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

Supporters of Doug Nelson, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Minneapolis mayor, successfully completed their petitioning drive June 25-27, collecting 700 signatures, 200 more than required to put him on the ballot.

Nelson is one of a slate of 19 candidates the party is running around the country. Each is building solidarity with union fights and offering a program to unite working people to successfully wage a fight to bring a workers and farmers government to power.

SWP candidates have helped lead the international drive to expand the readership of the *Militant* well over its goals. During the past nine weeks all party units met or exceeded their targets. This included 1,482 subscriptions, 1,493 books by SWP leaders and other revolutionaries and raising \$157,895 for the Militant Fighting Fund.

Among new readers of the *Militant* are 50 workers behind bars. The *Militant* waged successful fights to reverse prison authorities’ moves to ban

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UN says ‘No!’ to Washington embargo on Cuban people

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — The United Nations General Assembly voted overwhelmingly June 23 to demand that Washington end its over 60-year-long economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba. At the session — the 29th in a row to vote for an end to the embargo — the vote was 184 for the resolution presented by Cuba with just two governments voting against, the U.S. and Israel, while Colombia, Ukraine and Brazil abstained.

“In 2020, Cuba, like the rest of the world, was faced with the singular challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic,” noted Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodríguez, when he introduced the resolution. The U.S. government saw the disease “as an ally” in stepping up its economic war on Cuba, he said.

“President Donald Trump implemented 243 unilateral coercive measures to restrict the visits of American travelers and harm other tourist markets, adopted wartime measures to deprive us of fuel supplies; hounded the health services

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Vale miners in Canada strike over boss attacks

Fight moves to axe retired workers’ health care



Militant/John Steele

Over 2,400 United Steelworkers union miners and other workers at Vale have been on strike in Sudbury since June 1. Sign reflects growing solidarity for the workers’ struggle.

BY KATY LEROUGETEL AND JOHN STEELE

SUDBURY, Ontario — “Everybody’s coming together more, including support from other unions — teachers, CUPE, Unifor and some government workers have come down,” Vale striker and Unit-

ed Steelworkers Local 6500 member Chris Banks told these *Militant* worker-correspondents on the picket line here June 25.

Over 2,400 USW members went out June 1 after voting down by an overwhelming majority the concession contract demanded by Vale bosses. Converted cargo containers were set up as picket shacks at Vale’s

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Campaign to expand reach of ‘Militant,’ books, fund April 24 - June 29 (Final chart)

Country	Sub quota	Subs sold	Books quota	Books sold	Fund quota	received
UNITED STATES						
Albany	80	81	80	82	\$8,000	\$8,420
Atlanta	80	86	80	86	\$11,000	\$11,342
Chicago*	115	121	115	115	\$13,600	\$13,692
Dallas*	45	48	40	42	\$3,000	\$3,020
Lincoln	15	15	15	15	\$400	\$401
Los Angeles*	105	112	115	122	\$13,250	\$14,125
Louisville	90	96	90	95	\$5,000	\$5,066
Miami	35	37	35	37	\$4,000	\$4,667
N. New Jersey	80	81	80	83	\$6,250	\$7,049
New York*	100	102	120	126	\$16,000	\$16,605
Oakland	90	93	90	96	\$13,000	\$13,162
Philadelphia	30	31	30	32	\$3,500	\$4,270
Pittsburgh	50	53	50	51	\$3,000	\$3,300
Seattle	95	96	95	104	\$12,500	\$13,127
Twin Cities	50	52	50	52	\$4,500	\$4,553
Washington	65	67	65	69	\$6,000	\$6,222
Other						\$1,300
Total U.S.	1125	1171	1150	1207	\$123,000	\$130,321
Prisoners	25	50				
UNITED KINGDOM						
London	45	53	45	62	\$4,000	\$5,615
Manchester	40	45	40	41	\$2,000	\$2,020
Total U.K.	85	98	85	103	\$6,000	\$7,635
Canada*	95	97	115	120	\$12,200	\$13,389
New Zealand	30	36	30	31	\$3,500	\$3,850
Australia	30	30	30	32	\$2,000	\$2,700
Total	1,390	1,482	1,460	1,493	\$146,700	\$157,895
SHOULD BE	1,400	1,400	1,400	1,400	\$145,000	\$145,000
*Raised goal						

Workers need unions to fight for jobs and for higher wages

BY TERRY EVANS

Reversing far-reaching unemployment still faced by millions, along with fighting the effect of rising prices for key necessities, requires action by working people and our unions — joining together to stand up to the bosses, their government and their two parties, the Democrats and Republicans.

President Joseph Biden and a bipartisan group of legislators announced agreement on a \$1 trillion infrastructure bill June 23 that Biden said “will create millions of American jobs.” But that isn’t true, the bill doesn’t create one single job. Instead, it would provide sizable payouts and lucrative contracts to owners of construction, rail, water, airport and broadband companies, who may decide to hire some workers down the road if they deem it profitable.

And the motivation for the bill has nothing to do

with putting workers back to work. Its goal is to advance the interests of the U.S. capitalist rulers against their strongest competitors. Biden says infrastructure improvements are needed to take on the growing challenge from Beijing. “We have to move and we have to move fast,” he said.

Within hours, the president, Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and especially the party’s left wing walked back the deal, saying they would only bring it to a vote if Republicans agreed to trillions more dollars for a series of other Democratic social reforms.

When it rapidly became clear this would kill the infrastructure bill, Biden reversed himself again and went on tour to try to promote the deal. But liberals like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar and the 93-member Progressive Caucus are threatening to kill the bill if their reform proposals — and tax increases — aren’t included.

Workers’ confidence grows

With more workers getting vaccinated, cases of COVID declining, and government lockdowns ending, plants, restaurants, shipping and other bosses are looking for workers to exploit. But that hasn’t ended the crisis for millions.

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Iran vote reflects working people’s distrust of regime

BY SETH GALINSKY

Ebrahim Raisi’s election as president of Iran June 18 was marked by the growing lack of trust in the country’s bourgeois clerical regime by working people. Less than half of eligible voters turned out, the lowest for a presidential election there since the 1979 revolution that overthrew U.S.-backed Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi. And some 3.7 million voters spoiled their ballots, 13% of the votes

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Alabama strikers picket NY hedge fund mine bosses

App-based UK Bolt drivers strike to be paid as workers

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN
AND DAG TIRSÉN

LONDON — Chanting “Enough is enough!” and “Driver power!” 100 members of the App Drivers and Couriers Union protested outside the London offices of the app-based Bolt cab hailing company here June 22. The action marked the start of a 24-hour strike where drivers log off the Bolt app and ask people not to use it.

“We’re here to demand ‘worker status,’” union leader Yaseen Aslam told the *Militant*. In 2016 Aslam and App Drivers and Couriers Union Secretary James Farrar initiated court action against the insistence by Amsterdam-based Uber that its drivers were self-employed. After five years of legal battles, and strikes and protests by the drivers, the Supreme Court in February ruled that the company must grant “worker status” to them. “Uber underestimated us,” Aslam said.

Similar legal victories have been won in Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, France and Belgium. Now, the union is taking action to force other U.K. operators, like Bolt, Ola, and FreeNow to recognize the ruling applies to them also.

Bolt claims it doesn’t apply because they have a different “operating model.” The Estonia-based company operates in 40 countries, employing more than 1.5 million drivers. In the U.K. it operates in London, Birmingham, and four other cities.

Worker status should mean that cab drivers are entitled to the minimum wage, holiday pay, and legal protection from being disciplined over so-called whistle-blowing.

Uber has refused to implement the

part of the court decision that says drivers’ minimum wage starts when they log onto the app. The company will pay only from when a ride is started. “Uber does what it can to avoid the consequences of the court ruling. But the ruling was an important victory, a foundation upon which we can build,” Farrar told the *Militant*, a judgment proudly shared by other drivers present.

In another development, Uber last month agreed to bargain collectively with the GMB union, the first time the company has recognized a union anywhere in the world. Uber agreed to meet with the union quarterly to discuss matters like health and safety. But it has refused to bargain over drivers’ income. The GMB estimates that tens of thousands of Uber drivers are entitled to back pay, amounting to as much as 12,000 pounds (\$16,660) each. Thousands have initiated legal action.

Arbitrary ‘deactivation’

“Although our income hasn’t improved, ‘worker status’ gives us greater protection and opens greater opportunity for our union to defend drivers’ rights, for example against arbitrary deactivation of drivers,” said Asim Bajwa.

Protesters told us about their personal experiences of being taken off the work list. “When I was ‘deactivated,’ it took me a week to get back working,” said Lee Ali, who’s been driving for Uber for six years and for Bolt for two. “I had done nothing wrong whatsoever. But I had to ‘prove my innocence’ with dash-cam photos. But no work, no pay. So, for having done nothing wrong, I lost a week’s money.”



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

London protest at Bolt, app-based cab hailing company, by 100 members of App Drivers and Couriers Union June 22. They logged off, called for passenger boycott in 24-hour strike.

In the past Uber has been accused of deactivating drivers who stood up for themselves, a form of victimization and a warning to others. If company deactivation is supported by Transport for London, an agency under London’s mayor, the driver loses access to all platforms. And today drivers can be deactivated through an algorithm!

The drivers have been fighting for a raise to 2 pounds a mile for two years. “We currently get 1.25 pounds a mile and 15 pence a minute,” driver Suleyman Bozkurt told us. “Then Bolt takes 15% ‘commission.’ Out of what we earn,

we have to pay for the car, its maintenance, insurance, and we must put away enough money to get a new car after a few years, given we’re driving thousands of miles every month. I’m working 12-hour days and taking home the same as I did when working as a bus driver on an eight- or nine-hour shift over 15 years ago!”

Bolt driver Korado Jaku, who came to the U.K. when he finished his studies in Greece and has been driving since, said taking part in union actions has “learned” him. “I’ve found we’ve got to fight for the most basic rights,” he said.

Crimean Tatars protest Russian occupation, 1944 deportations

BY JANET POST

Despite a brutally enforced ban by Moscow, which has occupied the Crimean Peninsula since 2014, Tatars did come out into the streets May 18 one by one. Many were holding signs commemorating the 77th anniversary of the mass deportation of the Crimean Tatar population hundreds of miles away to Central Asia and Siberia, under slanderous charges by Joseph Stalin that the entire people were agents of Nazi Germany.

Protesters held handmade signs declaring, “No to the deportation of the Crimean Tatars into the prisons of the

Russian Federation” and “May 18 continues to this day.” They were pointing to both what happened in 1944 and to continuing moves by Moscow to transfer hundreds of Tatars to Russia for show trials, torture and imprisonment.

Tatars and their supporters also demonstrated in cities outside Crimea, including London and Brussels. Commemorations took place in Ukraine, where many Crimean Tatars have relocated since Russian President Vladimir Putin seized the peninsula, and Ukrainian authorities opened a photo exhibit on the 1944 mass deportation.

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THE MILITANT

Fight to abolish the death penalty!

Capital punishment, including firing squad being promoted by South Carolina authorities, is a weapon of terror to intimidate workers from resistance as attacks by bosses, government grow. The ‘Militant’ campaigns for end to death penalty in defending prisoners’ rights.

Trent Nelson/Salt Lake tribune via AP
Gruesome firing squad execution chamber set up in Utah State Prison in Draper.

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‘Militant’ drive over the top!

Continued from front page

the paper in prisons in Indiana and Florida during the drive.

Campaign supporters from Louisville, Kentucky, and Chicago came for the target weekend in Minneapolis, joining in discussing with working people what can be done to change the conditions we face.

“Every day, where I work people, especially older people, are turned away for dental procedures they really need because their health insurance won’t cover the costs,” medical office worker Meghan Benton told SWP campaigners Mary Martin and Amy Husk when they knocked on her door. “It breaks my heart.”

Husk and Martin had shown Benton the party’s election campaign platform, which urges a fight by working people for universal, government guaranteed cradle-to-grave health care and retirement income for all. Benton signed up to put Nelson on the ballot, got a *Militant* subscription and *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart? Class, Privilege, and Learning Under Capitalism* by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the SWP.

In addition to collecting signatures needed to put Nelson on the ballot, campaigners got contributions to cover a substantial part of the \$250 required to put David Rosenfeld, SWP candidate for City Council Ward 12, on the ballot.

Campaign supporters participated in a June 26 Militant Labor Forum on labor battles taking place today. This includes the Teamster unionists, locked out by Marathon Petroleum in nearby St. Paul Park, who are fighting against the bosses’ attacks on safety and other work conditions.

‘Commitment to workers’ fights’

In the United Kingdom, supporters of Andrés Mendoza, the Communist League’s candidate for London mayor in May’s election, first met bus driver Joe Williams when they visited the picket line of bus drivers working for London United in March.

Williams told Mendoza, “I am with the *Militant*’s commitment to workers’ fights and promoting solidarity.” After the bus drivers strike Williams said he “went with League members to the picket line of workers at the Jacobs Douwe Egberts plant in Banbury,” where workers were fighting wage cuts.

Williams has just renewed his *Militant* subscription and bought a copy of *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Inter-*

pretation by Abram Leon to learn more about the roots of Jew-hatred and what can be done to end it. CL and SWP campaigners will be encouraging new readers of the *Militant* to join them on picket lines and other protests in the interests of the working class in the coming weeks.

One of the titles that proved popular during the drive in Canada was *Red Zone: Cuba and the Battle Against Ebola in West Africa* by Enrique Ubieta Gómez, reports Communist League member Katy LeRougetel from Montreal. “Especially after we got the French-language edition,” she said. The book describes the decisive contribution of Cuban medical volunteers to pushing back the spread of the deadly disease in 2014, showing what a socialist revolution makes possible.

Communist League campaigners in Montreal explain “how the Cuban government today has mobilized the population to deal with the pandemic,



Militant/Mary Martin

Doug Nelson, SWP candidate for mayor of Minneapolis, talks to medical office worker Sergio Ramirez May 22. Supporters have gotten more than enough signatures to put Nelson on ballot.

and has developed a highly successful vaccine and are organizing to inoculate the entire population,” LeRougetel said.

If you want to join SWP candidates campaigning and help advance a working-class road forward, check the directory on page 8.

NY debate on how to deal with rising crime, cop brutality

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK — “Working people are discussing the rise in assaults and robberies here and across the country, and police brutality,” Róger Calero, Socialist Worker Party candidate for mayor, told the *Militant* June 30.

Calero and running mates Willie Cotton for public advocate and Sara Lobman for Manhattan Borough president are campaigning door to door, at taxi lines, construction sites, union picket lines and other protests. They present a road forward for working people and our unions in the face of high unemployment, speedup on the job and rising prices of food and basic necessities. They take up international questions from opposition to the U.S. embargo of Cuba to unconditional defense of the right of Israel to exist.

Police reform and crime were at the center of debate here among the capitalist candidates ahead of the June 22 Democratic and Republican Party primaries.

Eric Adams, currently the leading Democratic Party mayoral candidate, “presents things as if there are only two options: rampant violence and criminal mayhem or a reformed tough-on-crime, pro-police approach that brings back stop and frisk, ‘broken windows’ policing of the Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg era,” Calero said. “Crime did decline during those years. But at an

enormous price for working people.”

“The cops carry out the same function in every capitalist country,” Calero said. “It’s not racism or white supremacy that’s their motor force. They exist to serve and protect the property, profits and prerogatives of the capitalist class.”

Despite anger at cop brutality, calls to defund the police are not popular among working people, Calero noted. That’s reflected in the rise of Adams and the decline of “woke” pro-defund candidates like Maya Wiley.

Like elsewhere, in New York the capitalist rulers “pulled back the police presence and took a hands-off approach to the violence, drug dealing and anti-social mayhem in working-class neighborhoods,” in retaliation for calls by liberals and middle-class radicals to “defund” or abolish the cops during last year’s protests against police brutality, Calero said.

Adams presents himself as the working-class candidate. “We don’t want fancy candidates. We want candidates, their nails are not polished, they have callouses on their hands and they’re blue collar people,” Adams told the press.

“None of what Adams or any of the capitalist candidates and politicians put forward are a solution to crime or police brutality,” Calero said. “The only way to do away with crime and police brutality is to do away with the capitalist system itself, which produces both.”

“We need to conduct struggles that strengthen solidarity and independent political organization by the working class, as part of fighting to replace capitalist rule with a government of workers and farmers,” Calero said

Calero pointed to a *Wall Street Journal* article on the 2014 California referendum that made the theft of items valued less than \$950 a misdemeanor instead of a felony. One internet video shows someone fill up a duffle bag at a store and leave without any attempt by the security guard to stop the theft.

“I tell workers we need to reject lowering the bar on what is considered acceptable behavior,” Calero says. “We don’t accept thuggery, hustling, stealing and preying on fellow workers. These actions undermine and degrade working people and the solidarity we need.”

“The best example is Malcolm X,” Calero said. “After an early life of anti-social crime, he was sent to prison, where he cleaned himself up, began reading and studying, and became political. After he got out, he developed, and became an outstanding revolutionary leader for all working people.”

One week after the primaries, the Democratic Party race is in total disarray. For the first time, city officials used “ranked voting,” where voters are encouraged to choose up to five candidates in order of preference.

The elections board released a preliminary count election night that showed Adams ahead with 28.8% of the vote, Wiley with 19.9% and Kathryn Garcia with 17.8%. A week later the board released a second count, with “rankings” factored in. The new count showed a mysterious increase of 140,000 votes. Neither count includes the 124,000 absentee ballots. The board says they mistakenly added in “test” ballots. Oops!

“It was announced overnight in New York City that vast irregularities and mistakes were made,” former President Donald Trump commented. “They should close the books and do it all over again, the old-fashioned way.”

“Vote fraud is nothing new,” Calero said. “But the biggest fraud they perpetuate is denying working-class parties and candidates, like the Socialist Workers Party, a place on the ballot by putting insurmountable requirements in the way.”

Volvo strike in Virginia fights divisive wage tiers

BY ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

The strike by 2,900 members of United Auto Workers Local 2069 at Volvo’s largest North American truck manufacturing plant is now in its fourth week. Workers are standing firm with round-the-clock pickets at the New River Valley plant in Dublin, Virginia.

Strikers got a boost when fellow unionists from UAW Local 3520 walked the picket line June 19, driving up from the Freightliner plant in Cleveland, North Carolina.

A key issue in the strike is getting rid of the multiple wage tiers that the company uses to try to keep workers divided and drive down wages. Under the current contract, new hires make \$16.77 an hour while a “core group”

of workers with the most years in the plant make \$27.47.

“They have to stand their ground against the two-tier system. We were out in 2019 for the same reason,” David Fowler Jr., president of UAW Local 171 at the Volvo-owned Mack Trucks plant in Hagerstown, Maryland, told the *Militant* by phone. “We support the union and its members.”

In 2019 more than 3,600 workers went on strike against Mack in five U.S. cities. Volvo and Mack workers have joined each other’s picket lines.

Workers at Volvo have twice rejected bosses’ concession demands by 90%. The second offer was voted down overwhelmingly June 6 and the strike resumed the next day.

In a failed attempt to lure workers into voting “yes” while keeping the two-tier divisions, this proposal would have reduced the wage progressions from eight to six years.

Bosses are pressing for workers to pay more for health care, the weakening of seniority and four 10-hour shifts with no overtime pay. Currently overtime is paid after eight hours.

Volvo Group shareholders got a generous handout — \$2.3 billion — as the company passed along proceeds from the sale of a Japanese business unit this year and sought to calm investors’ jitters about the strike.

Send solidarity messages to UAW Local 2069, P.O. Box 306, Dublin, VA 24084 or UAWLocal2069@gmail.com.

Florida building collapse product of capitalist greed

BY STEVE WARSHALL

MIAMI — “There are important stakes for the working class in looking at what happened with the deadly collapse of the Champlain Towers South condominium building in Surfside and what caused it,” Anthony Dutrow, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Miami, tells workers as he campaigns across the region. “The weaknesses and serious degradation of the building’s structure was found in inspections three years ago, and the owners were urged to get them fixed. This was never done.”

Part of the 13-story building collapsed at 1:30 a.m. June 24, pancaking to the ground. As of June 29, 12 people have been confirmed dead and 149 were still missing, as rescue workers, including volunteers from a crack Israeli Defense Forces rescue team and volunteers from Mexico, continue searching for survivors or bodies.

Residents in the building included condo owners, some renters and others who used their units as vacation homes. “There was a beautiful mixture of cultures and people in that building,” neighbor Sergio Grobler, who has friends among the missing, told the press, “people from South America, Cuban Jews, American Jews, American nationals.”

Over 300 emergency personnel are poring over the wreckage. Requests from family members of those missing and other workers volunteering to help in the search have been turned down by authorities.

“We have all these able-bodied men, and we said, ‘Why can’t we come and help you? We’ll sign a waiver, we’ll help move debris, anything,’” Douglas Berdeaux, whose sister lives in the building and is listed as missing, told the *New York Times*. “I would think they would want as much manpower as you could muster under the circumstances.”

As facts about the design, construction and ongoing inspections and lack of repairs are coming out, it is clear that management, city officials and others knew about increasing dangers of disaster at the building and kept postponing any action.

Another part of the same building — Champlain Towers North — is still standing, and government officials have not ordered an evacuation. Some residents have left.

Engineer Frank Morabito, president of Morabito Consultants, inspected the building in 2018 and wrote a report for the board that “de-

tailed significant cracks and breaks in the concrete” structure of the building and a “major error” in the building’s design. He warned of “major structural damage.”

He also said previous attempts to fix the damage were marred by poor workmanship.

The tower was put up during a 1980s construction boom in Surfside, as builders and others sought to profit from getting structures erected as fast as possible. The condominiums were built by a now-defunct for-profit Canadian company called Toronto Enterprises.

Morabito told the board that repairs would cost at least \$9.1 million, maybe more once they got started. He bid for the job. Then he sent another note to the board, this time downplaying the danger. Rosendo Prieto, a town building official, went to the next board meeting, telling them he had reviewed the reports and the building appeared to be in “very good shape.”

Media reports say it took until 2020 for the board and Morabito to agree on a contract for repairs. In the meantime nothing was done. Tenant complaints about conditions increased.

Two researchers reported satellite images showed the building had been slowly sinking, as were others in the area.

In April of this year the board called a meeting of tenants. Board President Jean Wodnicki wrote them that the danger to the building would “multiply exponentially over the years, and indeed the observable damage such as in the garage has gotten significantly worse over the years.”

“When you can visually see the concrete spalling [cracking], that means that the rebar holding it together is rusting and deteriorating beneath



Above: Reuters/Marco Bello; inset, Militant/Amanda Ulman

June 28 vigil for residents of Champlain Towers in Surfside, Florida, after building collapsed. “Serious degradation of the building’s structure was found three years ago,” said Antony Dutrow, inset, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Miami mayor. “Owners were urged to get it fixed. This was never done.”



the surface,” she wrote. “The concrete deterioration is accelerating. The roof situation got much worse, so extensive roof repairs had to be incorporated.” The letter reported Morabito had been hired.

Tenants were told they would have to pay a \$15 million special assessment to cover the costs. Work began on the roof shortly before the building collapsed.

“These facts — which reflect the priorities and workings of the dog-eat-dog capitalist system and its profit-driven rents and mortgages system, regardless of the cost to working people — must be exposed and those responsible held to account,” Dutrow said.

Media at the site have reported hotel owners in the area have raised their rates as relatives of those missing, residents from the two buildings, rescue personnel, press and others have sought housing nearby.

The search has been hampered by

a fire that burned inside the wreckage and bad weather. The scene reminded some residents of the collapse of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

The main difference is that the World Trade Center was attacked, while building management, inspectors and city officials here knew of the structural disintegration unfolding in Surfside for years and did nothing.

“The Socialist Workers Party calls for workers to take control of production, construction and inspections, the only way to protect workers on the job and all those who use what is produced under capitalism. Lives were needlessly lost,” Dutrow said.

“Working people need to organize and use our unions to fight for this,” he said. “And to reach out and organize all those exploited and oppressed by capital on a course to take political power into our own hands, to build a workers and farmers government.”

Come to the Int’l Active Workers Conference in Ohio!

BY ROY LANDERSEN

The 2021 Active Workers Conference sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party July 22-24 is a unique opportunity to spend three intensive days with fellow working-class fighters discussing the road forward today.

The gathering, to be held at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, will build on the way the party turned outwards to working people in the face of government lockdowns and travel restrictions during the pandemic. To ensure a safe, relaxed environment, organizers are asking all those who

want to attend to make sure they’re fully vaccinated against COVID.

A centerpiece of the conference will be talks by Socialist Workers Party leaders Jack Barnes, Dave Prince and Mary-Alice Waters on world politics and key questions facing working people today. There will also be classes on lessons from the history of the labor and communist movement, including the class-struggle road to Black liberation, the fight for the unconditional recognition of Israel and against Jew-hatred, and the example that working people in Cuba set six decades ago and continue to set today in carrying out their socialist revolution and reaching out with solidarity worldwide.

A panel on plans to step up campaigning for the national slate of SWP candidates and of Communist Leagues elsewhere will conclude the conference. The schedule includes plenty of time for informal discussion on the themes of the conference and evening social events.

SWP supporters will meet the day after the conference to discuss their efforts to advance production of Pathfinder literature and raise funds for the party’s work.

The gathering takes place as more workers are back to work with govern-

ment restrictions being lifted and job opportunities expanding. Some important strikes and union-organizing drives have broken out across North America, showing that more workers are looking for a way to resist attacks by the bosses. Out of the conference, volunteer teams will be organized to fan out around the country to introduce the party’s campaign in cities and towns and to bring solidarity to striking workers.

If you are interested in helping to build a revolutionary working-class party and would like to discuss attending the conference, contact the SWP or Communist League branch nearest you listed page 8.



The Stewardship of Nature Also Falls to the Working Class: In Defense of Land and Labor

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—ON THE PICKET LINE—

Alabama strikers picket NY hedge fund mine bosses

NEW YORK — Ten coal miners on strike against Warrior Met Coal in Brookwood, Alabama, were joined by officials and staff members of the United Mine Workers here June 22 at informational pickets outside the hedge funds that own controlling shares in the company. That included BlackRock Fund Advisors, SSgA Funds Management, Inc. and Renaissance Technologies.

The profit-driven owners of these Wall Street firms took over the mine complex in 2016 during the bankruptcy of former owner Jim Walter Resources. They imposed deep takebacks on unionists' wages, benefits and working conditions as a condition for keeping the mine open. Some 1,100 miners are fighting to get back what they fought for decades to achieve. The strike began April 1.

They were joined by New York area supporters, including Sara Nelson, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA; a contingent from Local One of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees; several staff members from Local 388 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union; several pro-union Walmart workers; a UPS truck driver and a freight rail worker, both members of the Teamsters; and others.

The miners passed out fliers about their fight to those walking and driving by, drawing an especially positive response from taxi-cab drivers.

At the morning protest at BlackRock, the miners chanted for more than two hours. "Warrior Met Coal has no soul" and "No contract, no coal" were among the most popular.

—Sara Lobman

General Mills food workers in Australia strike, win pay raise

SYDNEY — "We won!" read placards outside international food monopoly General Mills factory in Rooty Hill, Western Sydney, June 24 after 89 workers, members of the United Workers Union, won their strike. They had maintained a 24-hour picket for three weeks.

They fought for a wage raise and

against company demands to increase weekend work. The bosses tried to keep the plant, which produces pasta, tacos and tortillas, running with casual workers, but could only keep up one line.

Strikers told the *Militant* June 19 that the company was losing money because of the strike and they were confident that they would win their demands. "The company made big profits, but they don't want to give us anything," one said.

On June 24 General Mills gave in. Workers won a wage raise of almost 9% over three years, retroactive to February when their old agreement expired, as well as a \$1,500 bonus. The company's initial pay offer had been 1.5% a year.

The agreement includes maintaining conditions as they'd been and no victimization of workers who participated in the strike, including casual workers who joined the picket line.

—Linda Harris



Militant/Sara Lobman

Members of United Mine Workers on strike against Warrior Met Coal in Brookwood, Alabama, and supporters picket one of company's owners, BlackRock hedge fund, in New York June 22.

Vale miners in Canada strike over boss attacks

Continued from front page

nickel mines in Greater Sudbury and beyond, as well as the Copper Cliff smelter and other processing facilities. They are decorated with union signs saying, "Local 6500 standing up for future generations."

We spent 2 1/2 days here bringing solidarity to the picket lines, speaking with strikers and other working people in the region at their doors.

Strikers thanked us for the solidarity card we brought with us signed by 29 Walmart workers in Montreal. It said their strike "strengthens the struggles of working people everywhere." They taped copies up on the walls of their picket shacks.

"My father fought for what we have. He worked for INCO before it was bought out by Vale. I don't mind being on strike because I know what we are fighting for," striker Ian Nebonaionoquet, a recently hired underground laborer who has yet to start his first shift, told the *Militant* at the Copper Cliff nickel smelter complex.

The bosses are demanding elimina-

tion of health benefits after retirement for all those hired after June 1, the day the old contract expired. This is the central issue in the fight with the Brazil-based international mining giant.

"If it wasn't for the older guys, we wouldn't have this stuff they're trying to take away. You've got to fight," Nebonaionoquet said.

Striker after striker, including young workers, told us that because of the diesel fumes, dust and foul air in the mines, as well as the toxic and carcinogenic chemicals they work with, they expect to face serious health problems after retirement and will need health benefits to cover medical costs.

The company is trying to create divisions among the workers, with different benefits for different groups of workers, to weaken the union, Brent Jackson said as he picketed at the Copper Cliff smelter. "We're here for future generations," he said.

History of strike battles in the mines

Memories of previous strikes over past decades are a significant factor in

the determination of the workers and their supporters in the area. In a bitter yearlong strike in 2009-10, Vale bosses attempted to keep production going with the use of scabs backed by strikebreaking security goons.

Hundreds of unionized trades people who work for independent contractors that service Vale here are not crossing the picket lines.

The strike "affects all the contractors, not just the people at Vale," Katelyn de Silva told us on her doorstep. She said her former partner is a contract worker and is on standby because of the strike. But "I support them," she said, noting she works in a long-term care facility with no benefits after retirement.

On the Copper Cliff North Mine picket line we met Tammy Lanktree, a community-care worker who has organized two "pop-up" demonstrations by strikers, family members and others in Sudbury, with signs saying, "We stand by you as you fight for them." Lanktree commented, "I couldn't just stay home and do nothing."

Lanktree's mother, Lynda Ferguson, a retired member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, picketed alongside her, wearing a union T-shirt. Like the miners, "we fought like hell to keep our benefits. We lost lifetime benefits in the last contract. We went on strike twice for pensions, wages, and especially benefits, but we lost them. When you retire, when you need them, they're gone," Ferguson said.

The company claims the mines' nickel deposits are running low, profits are falling and they can't continue to pay postretirement benefit obligations to the miners.

Union officials, strikers, and workers we met in the area challenged the company's statistics and its cynical effort to turn the victim into the criminal.

"Vale has underestimated the solidarity and intelligence of our membership," Local 6500 Vice President Kevin Boyd told the *Militant* in front of the union hall. "Vale has the legal right to exploit the ore in the Sudbury basin. But in reality, it belongs to Local 6500 since we mine it. So, we say to Vale: 'If you want it, come and get it. We will be here.'"

Messages of support and financial contributions should be sent to USW Local 6500, 66 Brady St., Sudbury, ON, P3E 1C8. Email info@uswsudbury.ca.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 22, 1996

CHICAGO — "Glad to see you here. These are great books. We've been carrying Pathfinder books in my store for some time and now the other stores in the chain have started ordering them," said a book buyer for a bookstore in Washington, D.C., as she stopped by the Pathfinder booth at the American Booksellers Association convention June 15-17.

She was one of several hundred people who stopped by the booth at the three-day trade show, the largest in the United States. Those visiting the booth included booksellers, librarians, and publishers from Mexico, Colombia, Chile, China, South Korea, Japan, Thailand, and Russia, as well as from Europe and Africa.

The booth displayed the majority of Pathfinder's titles in front of three big displays on the Russian revolution, U.S. and world politics, and the Cuban revolution.



July 16, 1971

NEW YORK CITY — Pvt. Ed Jurenas, the antiwar and socialist GI who had court-martial charges preferred against him at Ft. Greely, Alaska, for his role in publishing an antiwar newspaper, the *Arctic Arsenal*, was a keynote speaker at the rally that kicked off the July 2-4 National Antiwar Convention at Hunter College here.

The efforts by the brass to stifle the expression of antiwar sentiment have had a boomerang effect, according to Jurenas. In the course of building a campaign to defend their right to publish the *Arsenal*, he and the other GIs who worked on the first issue have drawn more GIs into antiwar activity.

A Ft. Greely GIs United Against the War has been formed. "The strongest reaction against what the brass is trying to do," Jurenas said, "has been among the GIs who have been to Vietnam. They are the most outspoken against the war."



July 13, 1946

Reports from the South, both from union and capitalist press sources, indicate that the CIO's million-dollar "Operation Dixie" to organize the exploited Southern workers is making slow but sure gains. Eleven elections had already been won in lumber, steel and textiles, at plants throughout the Southern area, which includes 12 states from Virginia to Florida and west to Texas. Petitions for union representation elections have tripled since December.

The great strike wave and wage victories of the CIO last winter and spring has given a powerful impetus to the organization of Southern workers. Birmingham and Atlanta steel workers, organized solidly, participated in the strikes.

Organization of the Southern workers, Negro and white, will lead to a veritable revolution in the backward social, economic and political relationships in the South.

Fight for jobs, higher wages

Continued from front page

Despite a slow decline in unemployment, over 7 million workers who lost jobs way back in February 2020 are still out of work, and a total of 14.8 million workers still get by only by some form of government help. The current level of long-term unemployed is nearly double that of any other recession since the late 1940s.

But this continuing crisis for workers is of no concern to the bosses — as long as workers and their unions haven’t risen up in rebellion. Profit expectations of S&P 500 companies in the first quarter of this year soared to the highest level since records began being kept.

“Workers need a fighting program to unite workers both on the job and unemployed in common struggle,” Malcolm Jarrett, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Pittsburgh mayor, told the *Militant*. “That’s why my party calls for a shorter workweek with no cut in pay to share whatever work is available around. Unions need to mobilize workers to fight for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay!”

The bosses’ press is littered with complaints by employers that they can’t get enough workers to stay on or take the jobs they’re offering today. As hiring opens up, workers lose their fear of looking for better pay and conditions.

Angelic Hobart, who represents

American Staffing at a St. Louis-area jobs fair, told the *New York Times* that workers’ “pay expectations are way over what their skill level is.”

That’s not how Elodie Nohone, who currently gets \$15 an hour as a visiting caregiver, saw things at the fair. “They’re offering \$10, \$12, \$13,” she said. “There’s no point in being here.”

Her boyfriend, Damond Green, holds two jobs, one at McDonald’s, where he gets \$15 an hour, and another as a home health care aide. “I want to do something where my work is appreciated,” he said, “and pay me decent.”

The bosses hate — and fear — workers who think they are worth something more. “Clearly part of the problem now,” Katharine Abraham, a former commissioner at the Bureau of Labor Statistics, told the *Times*, “is that what employers and what workers think is out of whack.”

This gap also means there is more room for workers to fight for higher wages, better working conditions, steady shifts and a measure of respect. This is part of what is behind a number of recent strikes, like at Warrior Met Coal, Volvo Trucks and ATI steel. All these fights deserve broad support.

Workers face rising prices

Prices are rising at the fastest rate in over a decade, eroding the living stan-



Unionists hold protest picket at Frito-Lay plant in Topeka, Kansas, May 3. On June 26 members of Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union Local 218 voted 353-30 to strike July 5. Bosses have stalled negotiations over pay raise and ending forced overtime.

dards of working people. Depending on which of two methods the government uses to calculate inflation, prices went up either 3.9% or 5% over last year in May. And neither of these calculations is based on the key necessities workers need, like food and gas, that are even higher.

The fact is that whenever prices start to go up, government bureaucrats rejigger how they report it to make it look smaller. “If we calculated inflation the same way we did in 1990, the inflation rate would currently be 8%,” Jared Dillon from Mauldin Economics wrote

June 27. “If we calculated it the same way we did in 1980, it would be 13%.” Dillon adds, “Some critics view these changes as a purposeful manipulation.”

Workers need to fight to win pay raises that match the disastrous impact of inflation, a fight that can only be won by building and strengthening our unions and making alliances with other producers.

“The Socialist Workers Party calls for contracts with a sliding scale of wages to protect our living standards from inflation,” Jarrett said. “Every time prices go up, our wages, retirement and other benefits should match the increase automatically.

“We need to unite with farmers, small shopkeepers, independent truckers, housewives and consumers to form price committees and fight for power over price setting,” Jarrett said. “When the bosses complain about their problems to justify raising prices, we demand they open their books so we can see the real story, and demand control over the fixing of prices, which should be determined by our needs, not their drive for profits.”

“These demands can be won — and have been won in the past — if we are united and determined, and by how well we fight,” Jarrett said.

Calls for Puerto Rico independence fill UN hearing

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

UNITED NATIONS — Nearly 20 speakers from organizations in Puerto Rico and the U.S. testified at a June 18 U.N. decolonization committee hearing, speaking out on the devastating consequences of U.S. colonial rule for the Puerto Rican people.

The committee adopted a resolution, introduced by Cuba’s revolutionary government, supporting “the inalienable right of the people of Puerto Rico to self-determination and independence.” Puerto Rico has been a colony of Washington since U.S. troops invaded the island in 1898. Working people there serve as an important source of superexploited labor for U.S. pharmaceutical and other bosses.

Puerto Ricans face catastrophic effects of “more than 15 years of economic depression,” said Juan Dalmau, general secretary of the Puerto Rican Independence Party. On top of that, he said, is “an unpayable debt” of \$74 billion.

Speaker after speaker described the sharp cuts in living standards dictated by the Financial Oversight and Management Board — known in Puerto Rico as the junta. It was imposed by the Barack Obama administration and U.S. Congress in 2016 to ensure debt payments to the wealthy bondholders.

Trilce Torres of the Gran Oriente Nacional, a longtime pro-independence Masonic lodge, reported that “the junta has ordered increases in water and electrical utility rates and highway tolls; cuts of up to 10 percent in retirement pensions; slashing our public university’s budget to less than half of what it was.”

Others pointed to the failure of the U.S. and colonial governments to rebuild basic infrastructure since Hurricane Maria devastated the island in 2017, cutting off electrical power for nearly a year. Periodic blackouts continue today.

“Puerto Rico was particularly hard hit by the pandemic,” noted Gabriela Malespin of New York Boricua Resis-



Participants from June 18 UN hearing on decolonization of Puerto Rico join rally that day called by ProLibertad Freedom Campaign. Theme of protest was, “Solidarity with Puerto Rico and Cuba: Two Wings of One Bird.”

tance. And with the recent blackouts, hospitals “continue to go in and out of power even with back-up generators, ruining needed hospital equipment. Access to doctors, hospitals and critical health care on the island remains dire.”

Malespin called for abolishing the U.S.-imposed junta and canceling Puerto Rico’s debt. She said Puerto Rico needs a government “that prioritizes the needs of the working class.”

Myrna Pagán, a resident of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques, denounced the lack of medical facilities there since its one hospital was destroyed in the hurricane. Today, she said, there is only “an improvised facility in a storm shelter” and inadequate transportation to get emergency cases to the main island.

The colonial rulers’ response to the pandemic has magnified the social crisis in many ways — from high joblessness to a yearlong nightly curfew that was only lifted last month. As part of the government-imposed lockdowns, schools from preschool to university

“have remained closed for the last 15 months,” reported Esteli Capote of the Socialist Front. In addition, she said, 43% of the island’s schools have been shut down over the past 10 years.

Edwin Ortiz, from Call to Action on Puerto Rico, and other speakers denounced the recent handing over of the public electric utility to a private U.S.-Canadian company, Luma Energy. They noted that this has already dealt blows to the UTIER electrical workers union and will hike electric rates.

‘Cancel the debt!’

Martín Koppel, speaking for the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S., underscored the fact that “working people in Puerto Rico are not helpless victims — they are responding.” He pointed to the island-wide protests against the privatization of the electrical authority, a recent successful strike by dairy plant workers and ongoing protests by independent truckers. He joined the call to demand Washington cancel Puerto Rico’s debt.

Koppel added that “a successful fight for Puerto Rico’s independence from Washington’s rule will also strengthen working people in the U.S. We face a common enemy — the U.S. ruling capitalist class, their government and their parties, Democrats and Republicans alike.”

“We can’t make the mistake of believing that the election of a Democratic president in the U.S. will advance decolonization in Puerto Rico,” said Manuel Rivera of Puerto Ricans United in Action. “Democrats and Republicans alike have treated Puerto Rico the same way — like a private plantation.”

Several speakers rejected the so-called Puerto Rico Self-Determination Act, a bill sponsored by Democrats Nydia Velázquez and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, as a fraud. It “gives the U.S. government the power to approve or disapprove of our choices” on Puerto Rico’s status, said Ben Ramos of the ProLibertad Freedom Campaign. It “proves our colonial domination.”

At the end of the hearing, Cuban Ambassador Pedro Luis Pedrosó introduced the resolution in support of Puerto Rico’s right to independence, which the U.N. decolonization committee adopted. Pedrosó affirmed the Cuban revolutionary government’s longstanding solidarity with the struggles by Puerto Ricans.

Later that day, participants from the hearing joined a rally called by ProLibertad under the theme “Solidarity with Puerto Rico and Cuba: Two Wings of One Bird.” Some also attended a “dinner-dialogue” in the Bronx sponsored by the Frente Independentista Boricua (Puerto Rican Pro-Independence Front).

Juneteenth marked victory over chattel slave system

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Actions around the country celebrated Juneteenth, which only became a federal holiday two days earlier. June 19 marks an important milestone in the Second American Revolution, which abolished slavery and led to the strengthening of the working class with millions of freed Blacks.

After the Civil War ended in the summer of 1865, Union General Gordon Granger and his troops traveled to Galveston, Texas, and on June 19, 1865, he issued General Order No. 3.

It said: “The people are informed that, accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them, becomes that between employer and hired labor. The Freedmen are advised to remain at their present homes, and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.”

There were still 250,000 people enslaved in Texas, the last state of the Confederacy. This was over two years after President Abraham Lincoln had issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Not until December 1865 was the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ratified, which abolished slavery throughout the entire country.

Granger’s order recognized the new class relations established by these revolutionary measures — with capitalist “free-labor” replacing the slave system. This helped lead to a rapid expansion of capitalist production across the country and consequently of struggles waged by working people.

After the end of the war, Radical

Reconstruction was adopted, led by the most resolute opponents of slavery. This deepened the changes made possible by the overthrow of chattel slavery. With the passage of the 14th Amendment in 1868 freed slaves won U.S. citizenship. African Americans won the right to vote when the 15th Amendment was ratified in 1870.

The former slaves sought to advance their rights and demanded their own land and tools to farm, forging alliances with exploited farmers and other toilers in the South who were white. Their slogan was 40 acres and a mule. Small farmers and propertyless rural working people made up the big majority of the population in all the former Confederate states. In five states Blacks were a majority.

By 1867 Radical Reconstruction regimes, many led by Blacks, had been set up throughout the South, backed by the power of the Union army. These governments fought for implementation of Black rights and immediate and democratic demands in the interests of all working people. This included the first free public schools in the South, public hospitals and medical care for the poor, barring of racial discrimination, and expansion of a woman’s right to obtain a divorce.

The capitalist rulers, fearing this growing class alliance, withdrew Union troops from the South in 1877, accelerating a reign of terror by the Ku Klux Klan and other racist gangs. This bloody defeat of Radical Reconstruction, leading over decades of battle to the imposition of Jim Crow segregation, was the worst setback not only for Blacks but also for the entire working class.

Railroad strikes in 1877

A huge strike wave erupted that same year leading many workers to become

more aware of their common interests as a class. Railroad workers walked out in response to wage cuts by the bosses in the midst of a prolonged economic depression. The entire U.S. rail system was rapidly shut down, and large numbers of workers in other industries went on strike in solidarity.

Commenting on the importance of this “Great Strike,” Karl Marx, in a July 25, 1877, letter to Frederick Engels, wrote: “What do you think of the workers in the United States? This first eruption against the oligarchy of associated capital which has arisen since the Civil War will of course be put down, but it could quite well form the starting point for the establishment of a serious labour party in the United States.”

Marx explained the decision of the capitalist rulers to withdraw Union troops “will turn the Negroes into allies of the workers, and the large expropriations of land (especially fertile land) in favour of railway, mining, etc., companies will convert the farmers of the West, who are already very disenchanted, into allies of the workers.”

However, the growing economic and political strength of a rising capitalist class and lack of class struggle experience and leadership of the working class meant this didn’t occur. “Nonetheless, Marx could not have been more correct,” wrote Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, in *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, “about the alliance of social forces that would have to be at the center of a successful revolution in the United States — the working class, toilers who are Black, and exploited farmers.”

These are some of the monumental consequences of the overthrow of the slave system in the U.S. that is marked by Juneteenth.

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The Militant July 12, 2021 7

‘In US prison system, just going to trial earns you respect’

One of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for July is the French edition of *Voices from Prison: The Cuban Five*. Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández and Ramón Labañino were arrested on frame-up conspiracy charges by the FBI in 1998 and given draconian sentences. They were monitoring the plans of Cuban American paramilitary outfits in Florida with a long record of armed attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil. The Five were freed under the pressure of growing protests worldwide — a “jury of millions” — with Hernández, Labañino and Guerrero the last to return to Cuba in 2014. The excerpts are from a 2013 interview with René González by the Cuban weekly Escambray. Copyright © 2014 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY RENÉ GONZÁLEZ

In the United States, “arrest” is a euphemism for assault. They storm your home in a show of force to paralyze you; that’s the first step to try to soften you up. The federal police started beating on the door; in other cases they used a battering ram. We lived down a very narrow hall and the door was made of iron. It seems they couldn’t physi-



Watercolors painted in prison by Antonio Guerrero, one of the Cuban Five, who learned to paint while behind bars. Left, “The jury’s verdict” shows fellow prisoners applauding the Five as they returned unbowed after being found guilty on frame-up charges. Guerrero called this “the first act of solidarity with our cause.” Above, “The sentences.” The five all got long prison terms, some life sentences. Guerrero said that the “harsh and unjust sentences had only one purpose: punishing Cuba.” The Five were keeping the Cuban government informed of U.S.-based Cuban rightists’ plans for violent attacks against Cuban Revolution.

cally knock it down. They banged on it violently and when I opened, they entered with pistols drawn. They shoved it open, threw me to the floor as they threatened me with the pistol, and immediately cuffed me.

When Olguita came out of the bedroom they threw her against the wall. Then they stood me up, asked me if I was René González, if I belonged to Brothers to the Rescue. That Saturday they took me away to prison.

ESCAMBRAY: How would you describe the first days in prison?

GONZÁLEZ: The first days are terrible. Besides, our case was different from the common practice in which they take you to a receiving area, give you clothing, explain how the prison works and let you make a phone call.

We were given special treatment; in military terms they call it “shock and awe” — they violently arrest you and take you to the FBI to see whether or not you’re the kind of person who will plead guilty, who will cooperate. They immediately put you in the “hole,” alone, to make you start thinking about what lies ahead for you. Those are days when you can’t sleep; they didn’t even give us a sheet, nothing.

At that moment the die is cast. If you didn’t decide to capitulate then, you weren’t going to do it later. From that point on we decided we were not going to give in, and that was that. That’s what I had to confront.

Those were difficult days, right up to

Monday. It was all well-staged. They keep you alone with your thoughts on Saturday and Sunday, without shaving or brushing your teeth. On Monday they dress you up like a clown and take you down to the courtroom. They make you walk down an aisle and there’s this mob of people, full of hatred, looking at you shackled, unkempt, with a cadaverous look, and at the same time you’re worrying about your family.

I was lucky. When they brought me out of the elevator and made me face that room full of people, and I was looking for my family, I suddenly heard a shout: “Daddy!!!” I looked around and saw Irmita giving me a big thumbs-up. From that moment on I took a deep breath and told myself: this breath will last me until this is over, and it’s still with me.

ESCAMBRAY: What did you hold onto, to keep from selling out, as some other members of the Cuban network did?

GONZÁLEZ: Basically, human dignity; I believe in the value of dignity. The trial showed there are some who don’t believe in it, but human values do exist. We all assert them, but under conditions like those, you see who believes in them and who doesn’t. The Five believed in them. If human values exist, I don’t see why a human being must give in to brute force — political convictions aside.

Just because these people have the power to mistreat me, to lock me up, I’m going to give in? No one taught me there is any value to that. In addition, there’s the mission you were carrying out, the understanding of your cause, your awareness of what you were doing — knowing you are right, knowing you were defending human lives, knowing you are being tried unjustly.

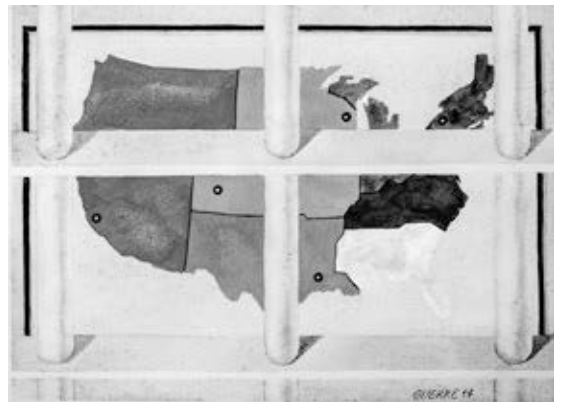
All this adds up. And on top of that is the way they act. You see them lying to the judge, blackmailing witnesses, deceiving the court, defying the judge’s orders, lying to the jury, coaching people to lie. As you see the depths to which they will

go, you say: just how low can they get? At that point you tell yourself: I can’t give in to these people.

ESCAMBRAY: You were locked up in Pennsylvania, South Carolina and Florida. How do you win respect in such a hostile environment?

GONZÁLEZ: In the case of the US prison system, just going to trial earns you a lot of respect — almost no one goes to trial. People are afraid to go to trial; the system is rigged in such a way that in a trial you will lose. Your lawyers will talk you out of it and persuade you to cooperate with the prosecutor, and cooperating always ends up meaning you have to finger somebody. What’s involved? When you went to trial, you stood up to the government.

People respect you a lot for that. Besides, they know you won’t finger them.



“Five distant prisons” by Antonio Guerrero. Cuban Five spent up to 16 years in prison, with each one confined in a different federal facility. They were part of the U.S. working class behind bars.

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Workers need fighting unions, our own party

Statement by Willie Cotton Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City public advocate, June 29.

Working people — who bear the brunt of today’s crisis of the capitalist system — are looking for ways to resist attacks by the bosses. At places where we are represented by unions, some of us are using them to stand up to employers’ attacks on wages and working conditions.

Each of these fights — like the strike by miners at Warrior Met in Alabama and several others — set an example. Each one requires the solidarity of fellow workers and all our unions.

But the percentage of workers in private industry who are unionized has declined for decades, standing at only 6.3% today. That is because our union officials refuse to lead us to use our power to fight for what we need. Instead they’ve hogtied unions into getting out the vote for the Democrats, one of the bosses’ twin parties. But both capitalist parties — and the con game of their contests to exchange seats in government — exist to defend the profits and prerogatives of the bosses.

As unemployment begins to drop, some employers complain they can’t find enough workers willing to work for the pay and conditions they offer, as bosses seek to increase their profitability. Many workers feel more confident to see if they can find jobs that pay more and to fight to make gains on the job.

Now is a good time to organize. The road to improving pay and conditions lies in common struggle by workers against the class that exploits us.

“The necessity — and opportunities — for working people nonunion and union alike, to be bold, to organize ourselves, and to mobilize mutual solidarity

have seldom been greater,” writes Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes in *The Turn to Industry: Forging a Proletarian Party*.

“The measure of our success will often not initially be the formation of new and powerful unions,” he writes. “It will be the experience and confidence workers gain as we act together. It will be our increasing political knowledge and consciousness of the employers — and of ourselves. It will be our pride and our readiness to stand up and be counted as we act together as part of a common class.”

This provides the foundation for building unions and a working class movement of millions in the years ahead as the crisis of capitalism continues to wreak havoc with our lives.

It is out of such struggles that a disciplined and class-conscious vanguard of the working class can be built. To speak and act on all political questions from the standpoint of our class and all exploited producers, not the bosses — from the capitalists’ profit-driven anarchy in production and distribution of vaccines to their responsibility for the deadly collapse of the Champlain Towers in Florida.

Out of these struggles working people and our unions will break with the bosses’ Democratic and Republican parties and build a party of our own. The national slate of SWP candidates in 2021 offers an example of what such a party would say and do.

Everywhere we explain why working people are capable of building a movement to replace capitalist rule with a workers and farmers government, and lead millions to take control over the factories, farms and entire economy. Join us in building a party to make a socialist revolution possible!

Crimean Tatars protest Russian occupation

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On June 26, Tatars in Ukraine commemorated the 30th anniversary of Crimean Tatar Flag Day, which is also banned in Crimea. Tatars, other Ukrainians and exiled members of the Mejlis — the national leadership of the Crimean Tatars — carried a 52-by-30-foot flag on a 10-day marathon throughout Ukraine, ending in Kyiv. A rally was held on Maidan Independence Square June 26, followed by a procession down Kyiv’s main street, and a concert titled “Two Flags — One Country.”

The Maidan was the popular mobilization that ousted the Moscow-backed Ukrainian government of Viktor Yanukovich in 2014.

The Crimean Tatar flag was adopted in 1917 by the first Tartar National Congress, or Qurultay. After being crushed under Stalinist repression a decade later, the Mejlis was banned, and wasn’t reinstated until June 26, 1991. Its longtime leader Mustafa Dzhemilev, who had been imprisoned by Stalin, participated in the commemoration, as did current Mejlis chairman Refat Chubarov. Both are banned by Moscow from going back to Crimea.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, many Tatars were able to return to Crimea and fought to regain their homes and reestablish their cultural heritage. But after the Russian government seized the peninsula in 2014, and cracked down on all opposition, the Russian Federal Security Service and other police forces raided the Mejlis headquarters, homes, mosques and schools. Then they banned the Mejlis, which had organized thousands to protest Moscow’s occupation.

The June 26 celebrations also mark the birthday of Emir-Usein Kuku, a Crimean Tatar human rights activist framed up and imprisoned in Russia for the last six years. He and more than 100 Tatar Muslim prisoners are incarcerated on “terrorism” charges for their political activity.

Last fall Kuku issued a statement from prison, saying, “We Crimean Tatars have always remembered and will never forget that Crimea is our land. We did not give it to Russia, nor did we sell it.

“We, the people, did not recognize and will not recognize as legal the occupation and annexation of Crimea by Russia, neither in 1783 [when the Russian czarist regime seized Crimea], nor in 2014 and now.”

After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, the Tatars established an autonomous socialist republic in the newly formed Soviet Union, as did the Ukrainians. Use of their native languages and culture flourished and national pride grew. Revolutionary leader Vladimir Lenin’s proletarian internationalist course supported the right of all peoples oppressed by the czar’s “prison house of nations” to self-determination.

Under Lenin, Tatars flourished

In “A Struggle for Home: The Crimean Tatars,” a 2016 documentary by Christina Paschyn, narrator Brian Glyn Williams explains that “one of the periods Crimean Tatars flourished the most” was in the 1920s when “Vladimir Lenin recognized the Crimean Tatars as Crimea’s native population.”

Williams explains that under the Bolsheviks, the Tatars had control of their own parliament, schools, police and other institutions; practiced their own language; and women gained the right to vote. “Crimean Tatars benefited from communist rule,” he says.

“But,” the film explains, “this golden age came to an end when Joseph Stalin rose to power.”

In the late 1920s, a growing Soviet bureaucratic caste, led and epitomized by Stalin, carried through a bloody counterrevolution against the policies of the Bolsheviks. National rights were trampled on, in Crimea, Ukraine, and elsewhere across Russia. Famine stalked the land as Stalin carried out a forced collectivization that led to widespread starvation.

In the 1944 deportation more than 200,000 Tatars were exiled, most transported in filthy, freezing and suffocating box cars. Some 46% died on the forced journey or within the first two years of exile.

Moscow organized a Russification program in Crimea, relocating thousands of native Russians on land and homes left vacant by the Tatars’ deportation.

That “was a day that indeed turned the entire history of the Crimean Tatar people upside down, and sent them decades, if not centuries, back. After all, this was no mere resettlement, but an operation aimed at the destruction of a people,” Mustafa Dzhemilev told the Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group May 18. “Yet, we do not speak of the deportation out of a desire to avenge what was done to our people. We remind people of it so that nothing like this is ever repeated.”

Iran presidential vote

Continued from front page

cast, close to three times any previous election.

The victory of Raisi — a close ally of 82-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and firm supporter of the country’s notorious Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps — was a foregone conclusion. The Guardian Council, which oversees Iran’s elections, disqualified most of his potential competitors, including former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and former Speaker of the Parliament Ali Larijani, approving only seven candidates. Three of them dropped out in the final days of the race, helping ensure Raisi’s victory with 62% of the vote.

The election assures that the course of the country’s capitalist rulers to export their counterrevolutionary political sway at home and through the region will continue. These policies have led to protests and strikes across the country over the last three years.

Hundreds of temporary workers hired by subcontractors at oil, refinery and power stations run by the National Iranian Oil Company went on strike in eight provinces across the country just days after the vote. They are demanding higher wages, payment of back wages and 10 days off after every 20 days of work.

According to Iran’s semiofficial Iranian Labour News Agency, “Being entrusted to a contractor is one of the nightmares of workers in Iran.” Contract bosses impose 12-hour and even 16-hour days on the workers, conditions are unsafe, food and housing is inadequate, “and sometimes workers don’t get paid for months,” said labor activist Nasser Aghajari. “Workers should be allowed to form a union.” Permanent employees are backing the strike.

The capitalist rulers and their media in the U.S. portray the regime in Iran as if it represents the continuation of the 1979 revolution that deposed the shah’s dictatorship. That was a deep-going, modern, popular social revolution in city and countryside that wrought far-reaching advances for workers, women and Iran’s oppressed nationalities. But it didn’t succeed in bringing to power a government of workers and farmers.

Instead, a clerical bourgeois-dominated counterrevolution — a coalition of rival middle class and bourgeois factions — pushed back the toilers.

But the only way that regime can try to maintain itself in power is to extend its reactionary influence through the region, in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and divided Kurdistan, a course backed by all of the regime’s factions. It calls for the destruction of Israel and for driving the Jews out.

The Iranian rulers live in fear of the working class. Massive protests by working people — taking advantage of divisions in ruling circles — swept the country in December and January 2017-18 and again in November 2019. These were fueled by rising discontent among working people, whose children the regime used as cannon fodder in its foreign interventions at the same time they were forced to pay for the capitalist economic crisis, exacerbated by U.S. sanctions. Inflation today is 40%. This unrest was reflected in a sharp drop in electoral participation.

One reflection of that fear of working people is the widespread use of the death penalty for both political and criminal offenses. At least 267 people were executed in 2020. While down from 972 in 2015, that’s still more than anywhere else except China, which has more than 15 times the population of Iran.

Raisi, a long-standing judicial official, served on a 1988 commission that organized the “extrajudicial execution” of thousands of regime opponents.

While campaigning, Raisi tried to portray himself as a friend of working people and opponent of corruption. The state-run Islamic Republic News Agency reported that in Ahvaz, in oil-rich southwestern Khuzestan province, residents handed him letters describing their economic hardships. Raisi promised the crowd that he would focus on solving problems.

The election took place as the administration of Joseph Biden is pushing to draw Tehran into reinstating the U.S.-Iran nuclear deal agreed to by Barack Obama in 2015. Donald Trump withdrew Washington from the agreement in 2018.

Raisi said Tehran is willing to abide by the limits on producing nuclear materials if Washington lifts “all oppressive sanctions against Iran” first. He also said Iran’s ballistic missile program is “not negotiable.” Nor is its support to its allies in the region, a reference to armed Iranian-backed militias.